

Hawaii stands at 370,000. In total, fully a quarter of all Hawaii residents are Filipino Americans, by far the largest percentage of any state or territory.

We observe Filipino American History Month in October because the first recorded arrival of Filipinos in the continental United States took place on October 18, 1587, when the “Luzones Indios” came ashore from the Manila-built galleon *Nuestra Senora de Esperanza* in Morro Bay, California. Today, across the country Filipino Americans have a population of approximately 4,400,000 and are the third largest Asian American and Pacific Islander group in the United States.

Many of the early Filipino immigrants were young men who came to the United States seeking a better life. Most found work in Hawaii, California, Washington and Alaska. This first generation of Filipino immigrants are commonly referred to as the Manong generation (Ilocano for first-born male). They worked mostly physically demanding jobs in tough conditions for very little pay. Over the years, they fought against discrimination, found a way forward and made a better future for themselves and their future generations. They became respected members of communities throughout our nation.

The history of the Fil-Am community in Hawaii is particularly rich and echoes the national story. In 1906, the first 15 sakada contract laborers arrived in Honolulu from the Philippines aboard the *SS Doric*, marking the first sustained immigration into our country and the humble beginnings of Fil-Ams in Hawaii. These first immigrants, those that followed and the subsequent generations eventually became trailblazers in politics and government, the military, business and entrepreneurship, journalism, popular culture, music and the arts and more.

Domingo Los Banos was Hawaii's first Filipino American school principal and a loyal veteran of the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment that fought in the Philippines during World War II.

Carolina Dizon Wong broke a glass ceiling when she obtained an M.D. degree and became the first Filipino American to start a medical practice in Hawaii in 1952.

Peter Aduja became the first Fil-Am elected to public office in the United States when he was elected to the Hawaii Territorial House of Representatives in 1954.

Ines Cayaban was the first Filipino American graduate of the School of Public Health, Nursing and Social Work at the University of Hawaii. She received the prestigious Jefferson Award in 1986 for her service.

In 1994, Ben Cayetano was elected the Governor of Hawaii, becoming the first Filipino American governor of a state in our union.

In 2019, Roy Macaraeg became the first Fil-Am to become a general officer in the history of Hawaii's citizen soldier ranks.

In Hawaii, we also regularly honor the over 250,000 Filipinos who answered the call to protect and defend America and the Philippines in the Pacific theater. In 2016, President Obama signed into law the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act to bestow Congress's highest honor upon those veterans. With my colleagues in the House, I have introduced our Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act, which seeks to reunite World War II Filipino soldiers with their children, so that we can honor those living in our community who fought to protect the free and open Indo-Pacific that we have today.

Each and all of these lives of achievement are but a small sampling of a broader community that has achieved so much and contributed so much to the rich fabric of our country. And the story of Filipino Americans is still in its early chapters.

This is why it is important that we take the time to recognize groups like Filipino Americans. The story of Filipino Americans, and to an extent, the stories of all of our various ethnic groups, is the story of America. From very humble beginnings, they have risen through hard work, sacrifice, commitment to advancing the next generations and mutual support to achieve so much already. That well describes Filipino Americans overall—embracing the responsibilities and opportunities of America while honoring and treasuring the rich heritage of their ancestral homeland.

All of this is why I joined my friends and colleagues Congresswoman MICHELLE STEEL, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, Congressman JAMES MOYLAN and others in introducing this bipartisan resolution to express support for the designation of October as Filipino American History Month. We urge our colleagues' support to promote an ongoing appreciation of the contributions of Filipino Americans to our country and the rich diversity of our nation.

To Fil-Ams everywhere, “Maraming Salamat Po” and “Dios ti Agngina”—congratulations. I truly look forward to partnering with them on their next proud chapters.

#### HONORING DAVE CORT

#### HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Dave Cort's 32 years of service as the San Geronimo Valley Community Center's Executive Director.

Dave became the Community Center's first executive director in June of 1991. This part-time job was the first paid position for the organization and came with only three required qualifications: owning a truck, being able to lift 100 pounds, and possessing people skills. His role and the services provided by the Community Center expanded exponentially over the next 3 decades.

Dave ensured the Community Center was a successful resource for the San Geronimo Valley residents. He reformed the local delivery service, partnered with Lagunitas School District to facilitate after-school and daycare programs, and managed the expansion of senior services to include a new Senior Lunch program in the early 2000s. Understanding the need for recreation opportunities to promote community wellness, Dave also worked to build the Community Gym in 2010.

In 2019, Dave rallied community donors to seed the Deepening Roots Endowment with \$2 million. A year later, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for financial security for the Center in order to provide critical services to the San Geronimo Valley community emergencies. During the pandemic, Dave assembled the Community Center's resources to bring vaccines, tests, food, emergency funds, accurate information, and a sense of community to the residents of West Marin.

Today, the San Geronimo Valley Community Center has a staff of 22 people and a

comprehensive mission to foster healthy communities within the San Geronimo Valley and Nicasio. Thanks to Dave Cort's dedication and leadership, the organization has become integral to the quality of life for the community, ensuring local residents have access to quality programs in the arts, youth services, senior services, community events, and more.

Mr. Speaker, Dave Cort exemplifies what it means to be a community-minded public servant. His contributions to the San Geronimo Valley Community Center and the people of West Marin are extraordinary and appreciated. Therefore, please join us in congratulating him for decades of inspiring work.

#### COMMENDING JOHN SHELL FOR HIS SERVICE TO ALABAMA DISTRICT ONE

#### HON. JERRY L. CARL

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. CARL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor John Shell for his service to Alabama's First Congressional District. John Shell initiated the Eagle Reef Project, which involves deploying reef structures to foster marine life. These reefs are installed under docks or wharfs to filter and clean up to 10,000,000 gallons of water annually. They provide homes for many species of fish and crabs. John raised \$52,000 for 175 reefs in aims to expand the project to reach 1,000 reefs along the coast of Alabama, and eventually to Mississippi and Florida. He hopes to do a similar project in coastal areas along the Gulf and the Atlantic.

His environmental impact on our waters is remarkable. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

#### HONORING REUNION OF U.S. ARMY NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER CANDIDATE COURSE

#### HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to hundreds of United States Army veterans who are gathering in and around our nation's capital the week of September 25, 2023, to join in reunion of their graduation from the Noncommissioned Officers Candidate Course (NCOCC).

The program was established for the training of noncommissioned officers in the U.S. Army. The program operated at Fort Benning, GA, Fort Bliss, TX, Fort Knox, KY, Fort Sill, OK, and Fort Leonard Wood, MO, from 1967 to 1972, during the height of the Vietnam War. As a proud graduate of the program and fellow Vietnam War veteran, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and saluting these leaders, combat veterans—many of them wounded—and unsung heroes.

As the Vietnam War progressed in the 1960s, the Army was running out of noncommissioned officers in several combat specialties. In order to meet these unprecedented requirements for Noncommissioned Officer

(NCO) leaders, the Army developed a solution based on the proven Officer Candidate Course. If a carefully selected soldier can be given 23 weeks of intensive training that would qualify him to lead a platoon, then others can be trained to lead squads and fire teams in the same amount of time. From this seed, the NCOCC was born.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Harold K. Johnson approved the concept on June 22, 1967, and on September 5, the first course at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), Georgia, began with Sgt. Maj. Don Wright serving as the first NCOCC Commandant.

Potential candidates for the course were selected from groups of initial entry soldiers who had a security clearance of confidential, an infantry score of 100 or over, and demonstrated leadership potential. Based on recommendations, the unit commander would select potential NCOs, but all were not volunteers. Those selected to attend NCOCC were immediately made corporals and later promoted to sergeant upon graduation from phase one. The select few who graduated with honors would be promoted to staff sergeant. The outstanding graduate of the first class, Staff Sgt. Melvin C. Leverick, recalled "I think that those who graduated [from the NCOCC] were much better prepared for some of the problems that would arise in Vietnam." The NCO candidate course was designed to maximize the two-year tour of the enlisted draftee.

Though over 300 hours of instruction was given, eighty percent was conducted in the field. The final basic phase was a "dress rehearsal for Vietnam," a full week of patrols, ambush, defensive perimeters, and navigation. Twice daily, the Vietnam-schooled rangers critiqued the candidates, and all training was conducted tactically.

These men, many now of advanced age, served our country with great honor under challenging circumstances. Four were awarded the Medal of Honor. Six are still missing. Many—1,118 in all—never made it home.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident that these outstanding noncommissioned officers and combat veterans were an indispensable part of our armed forces and served our country with bravery, dedication, and honor.

#### RECOGNIZING DIXIE FERGUSON

#### HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my dear friend, Dixie Ferguson, for her outstanding work and lifelong dedication to serving our men and women in uniform and the veterans of our Eastern Washington community.

Dixie began her service journey in 1966 when she joined the American Red Cross after graduating from the University of California, Davis. She joined the Clubmobile Service and provided support to our combat troops in Vietnam as a "Donut Dolly." Dixie became well-known for her work at USO shows—singing, dancing, and serving food—to the young men fighting for our freedom who were missing home. After returning home in 1968, Dixie served as a social worker at Long Beach Naval Hospital in California, Fitzsimons Army

Hospital in Colorado, and the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton where she supported those wounded in combat.

Fast forward more than 50 years later, and Dixie is still serving our active duty and retired service members through the American Red Cross Chapter in Walla Walla. In 2016, she earned the Red Cross Volunteer of the Year Award for her work as an outreach and emergency communications caseworker.

Dixie has gone above and beyond volunteering her time through the years. Most recently, she has played an instrumental role in documenting the stories of those who served in World War II and Vietnam through the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. To date, she has helped record nearly 200 veterans' stories. Additionally, Dixie has helped coordinate flights in the skies of Walla Walla for nearly 700 veterans as part of The Honour Project, while also proudly helping members of the Greatest Generation make their journey to visit the war memorials in Washington, D.C. as a part of the Inland Northwest Honor Flight.

There is truly no task too big or too small for Dixie. Throughout the years, she served on a local committee responsible for bringing the second Gold Star Families Monument to Washington state. In 2021, she established Volunteers Love Serving Veterans, a local non-profit committed to service. Most recently, she organized and planned an annual POW/MIA ceremony event, where she welcomed a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient to be the guest speaker.

One thing is certain: There are very few in our country who have rolled out the red carpet for our veterans like Dixie Ferguson has. Her love of service and dedication to our veterans has brought endless joy to the Walla Walla military and veteran community that continues to grow each year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the outstanding service of Dixie Ferguson to our men and women in uniform. Her work on their behalf is awe inspiring, and the profound impact she has had on our Nation's heroes will leave a legacy not soon to be forgotten.

#### RECOGNIZING OUR LADY OF VICTORY

#### HON. RASHIDA TLAIB

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. TLAIB. Mr. Speaker, today, I want to recognize the parish of Our Lady of Victory and its founding mother, Anna Bates, as they celebrate eighty years of service in faith to the people of Detroit in Michigan's 12th Congressional District.

Our Lady of Victory's story begins in a store front on Eight Mile Road in 1943. Mother Bates was instrumental in ensuring that the parish had a home in Detroit in spite of segregation and other challenges to a predominantly Black place of worship. In 1941, the city built an eight-foot segregation wall that extended a half-mile long just blocks from the new Our Lady of Victory mission site. As tensions over disparity and racial injustice came to a head, resulting in the 1943 protests, the wall became a symbol for the increasingly unjust living conditions for Black residents.

Spurred by the protest and increasing tension, Mother Bates spent ten years petitioning the archdiocese to create a house of worship for Black residents who were not permitted to enter any of the neighboring white Catholic Churches. Nearby Catholic parishes were adamantly opposed to welcoming Black Catholics. But Mother Bates persevered. Our Lady of Victory was finally recognized as a parish. Though the parish has relocated over the years, we are glad they are now housed in the St. Scholastica campus in Michigan's 12th District.

Please join me in recognizing of Our Lady of Victory's legacy in the fight against racial injustice, as they celebrate eighty years of service and fellowship in faith.

#### RECOGNIZING JAMES MANUEL VILLA WITH A CONGRESSIONAL VETERAN COMMENDATION

#### HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, September 29, 2023*

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to present James Manuel Villa of Waco, Texas with a Congressional Veteran Commendation.

James Villa's dedication is evident from his three combat deployments in Iraq with the Marines First Division, Second Battalion, 5th Regiment. Joining the Marines in 2002, his initial engagement in 2003 saw participation in the Battle of Al Faw, capturing pivotal regions around the Rumaila Oil Field, and ensuring security and stability in Samawah, Iraq. His subsequent deployment in 2004 to Ramadi earned him the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with combat distinguished service, a testament to his leadership as a fire team leader.

Even after fulfilling his enlistment and intending to pursue education at Baylor University, duty called him back. His third deployment brought more accolades for distinguished service in Fallujah, coupled with the significant responsibility of training 70 Iraqi police recruits. He attained the rank of Sergeant, receiving his honorable discharge in 2009.

Following his service with the Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton in 2009, James transitioned to education. He achieved his Bachelor of Arts from Rockhurst University in 2011 and later a Master of Education from Tarleton State University. Besides his academic achievements, James's impact in the community of Waco is profound. As an eighth-grade science teacher, he was celebrated as the 2017 Waco ISD Secondary Teacher of the Year. Today, he stands as a beacon of leadership and hope as the principal of La Vega High School, holding a deep-seated belief in the potential of every student and their ability to effect change in their community.

James, alongside his wife Ivy, are the proud parents of five daughters and three sons, reflecting his commitment both to family and nation.

For his relentless dedication to his country, and now his community, it is with deep respect that I present the Congressional Veteran Commendation to James M. Villa.